FREE THOUGHTS

ON THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CONGRESS at PHILADELPHIA, &c.

[Price One Shilling.]

FREE THOUGHTS

ON THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CONTINENTAL CONGRESS,

HELD AT

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 5, 1774:

WHEREIN

Their ERRORS are EXHIBITED,

THEIR

REASONINGS CONFUTED,

AND THE

Fatal Tendency of their NON-IMPORTATION, NON-EXPORTATION, and NON-CONSUMPTION MEASURES, are laid open to the plaineſt Underſtandings;

AND

The ONLY MEANS pointed out for Preſerving and Securing our preſent HAPPY CONSTITUTION:

In a LETTER to the FARMERS, and other INHABITANTS of NORTH AMERICA in general, and to thoſe of the Province of NEW-YORK in particular.

By a F A R M E R.

Hear me, for I WILL ſpeak!

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FREE THOUGHTS

ON THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CONGRESS at PHILADELPHIA, &c.

My Friends and Countrymen,

PERMIT me to addreſs you upon a ſubject, which, next to your eternal welfare in a future world, demands your moſt ſerious and diſpaſſionate conſideration. The American Colonies are unhappily involved in a ſcene of confuſion and diſcord. The bands of civil ſociety are broken; the authority of government weakened, and in ſome inſtances taken away: Individuals are deprived of their liberty; their property is frequently invaded by violence, and not a ſingle Magiſtrate has had courage or virtue enough to interpoſe. From this diſtreſſed ſituation it was hoped, that the

wiſdom and prudence of the Congreſs lately aſſembled at Philadelphia, would have delivered us. The eyes of all men were turned to them. We ardently expected that ſome prudent ſcheme of accommodating our unhappy diſputes with the Mother-Country, would have been adopted and purſued. But alas! they are broken up without ever attempting it: they have taken no one ſtep that tended to peace: they have gone on from bad to worſe, and have either ignorantly miſunderſtood, careleſsly neglected, or baſely betrayed the intereſts of all the Colonies.

I ſhall in this, and ſome future publication, ſupport this charge againſt the Congreſs, by inconteſtable facts: But my firſt buſineſs ſhall be to point out to you ſome of the conſequences that will probably follow from the Non-importation, Non-exportation, and Non-conſumption Agreements, which they have adopted, and which they have ordered to be enforced in the moſt arbitrary manner, and under the ſevereſt penalties. On this ſubject, I chooſe to addreſs myſelf principally to You the *Farmers* of the Province of New-York, becauſe I am moſt nearly connected

connected with you, being one of your number, and having no intereſt in the country but in common with you; and alſo, becauſe the intereſt of the farmers in general will be more ſenſibly affected, and more deeply injured by theſe agreements, than the intereſt of any other body of people on the continent. Another reaſon why I chooſe to addreſs myſelf to you is, becauſe the Farmers are of the greateſt benefit to the ſtate, of any people in it: They furniſh food for the merchant and mechanic; the raw materials for moſt manufactures, the ſtaple exports of the country, are the produce of their induſtry: be then convinced of your own importance, and think and act accordingly.

The Non-importation Agreement adopted by the Congreſs, is to take place the firſt of December next; after which no goods, wares, or merchandize, are to be imported from Great-Britain or Ireland; no Eaſt-India Tea from any part of the world; no molaſſes, ſyrups, paneles, coffee, or pimento, from our iſlands in the Weſt-Indies; no wine from Madeira, or the Weſtern Iſlands; no foreign indigo.

The Non-Exportation Agreement is to take effect on the tenth day of September next; after which we are not to export, directly or indirectly, any merchandize or commodity whatſoever, to Great-Britain, Ireland, or the Weſt-Indies, except RICE to Europe,—unleſs the ſeveral acts and parts of acts of the Britiſh Parliament, referred to by the fourth article of Aſſociation, be repealed.

The Non-conſumption Agreement is to be in force the firſt day of March next; after which we are not to purchaſe or uſe any Eaſt-India Tea whatſoever; nor any goods, wares, or merchandize from Great-Britain or Ireland, imported after the firſt of December, nor molaſſes, &c. from the Weſt-Indies; nor wine from Madeira, or the Weſtern Iſlands, nor foreign indigo.

Let us now conſider the probable conſequences of theſe agreements, ſuppoſing they ſhould take place, and be exactly adhered to. The firſt I ſhall mention is, clamours, diſcord, confuſion, mobs, riots, inſurrections, rebellions, in Great-Britain, Ireland, and the Weſt-Indies. This conſequence does not indeed immediately affect You, the

Farmers of New-York; nor do I think it a probable one: But the Congreſs certainly intended it ſhould happen in ſome degree, or the effect they propoſe from theſe agreements cannot poſſibly take place. They intend to diſtreſs the manufacturers in Great-Britain, by depriving them of employment ——to diſtreſs the inhabitants of Ireland, by depriving them of flax-ſeed, and of a vent for their linens,——to diſtreſs the Weſt-India people, by with-holding proviſions and lumber from them, and by ſtopping the market for their produce. And they hope, by theſe means, to force them all to join their clamours with ours, to get the acts complained of, repealed. This was the undoubted deſign of the Congreſs when theſe agreements were framed; and this is the avowed deſign of their warm ſupporters and partizans, in common converſation.

But where is the juſtice, where is the policy of this procedure? The manufacturers of Great-Britain, the inhabitants of Ireland, and of the Weſt-Indies, have done us no injury. They have been no ways inſtrumental in bringing our diſtreſſes upon us. Shall we then revenge ourſelves upon them?

them? Shall we endeavour to ſtarve them into a compliance with our humours? Shall we, without any provocation, tempt or force them into riots and inſurrections, which muſt be attended with the ruin of many—probably with the death of ſome of them? Shall we attempt to unſettle the whole Britiſh Government—to throw all into confuſion, becauſe our ſelf-will is not complied with? Becauſe the ill-projected, ill-conducted, abominable ſcheme of ſome of the coloniſts, to form a republican government independent of Great-Britain, cannot otherwiſe ſucceed?—Good God! can we look forward to the ruin, deſtruction, and deſolation of the whole Britiſh Empire, without one relenting thought? Can we contemplate it with pleaſure; and promote it with all our might and vigour, and at the ſame time call ourſelves *his Majeſty's moſt dutiful and loyal ſubjects?* Whatever the Gentlemen of the Congreſs may think of the matter, the ſpirit that dictated ſuch a meaſure, was not the ſpirit of humanity.

Next let us conſider the policy, or rather impolicy of this meaſure. Inſtead of conciliating,

ciliating, it will alienate the affections of the people of Great-Britain. Of friends it will make them our enemies; it will excite the reſentment of the government at home againſt us; and their reſentment will do us no good, but, on the contrary, much harm.

Can we think to threaten, and bully, and frighten the ſupreme government of the nation into a compliance with our demands? Can we expect to force a ſubmiſſion to our peeviſh and petulant humours, by exciting clamours and riots in England? We ought to know the temper and ſpirit, the power and ſtrength of the nation better. A ſingle campaign, ſhould ſhe exert her force, would ruin us effectually. But ſhould ſhe chooſe leſs violent means, ſhe has it in her power to humble us without hurting herſelf. She might raiſe immenſe revenues, by laying duties in England, Ireland, and the Weſt-Indies, and we could have no remedy left; for this non-importation ſcheme cannot laſt for ever. She can embarraſs our trade in the Mediterranean with Spain, Holland, &c. nor can we help ourſelves; for whatever regulations ſhe ſhould make, would effectually be enforced, by the ſame

Navy

Navy that ſhe keeps in readineſs to protect her own trade.

We ſhall alſo, probably, raiſe the reſentment of the Iriſh and Weſt-Indians. The paſſions of human nature are much the ſame in all countries. If they find us diſpoſed wantonly to diſtreſs them, to ſerve our own purpoſes, will they not look out for ſome method to do without us? Will they not ſeek elſewhere for a ſupply of thoſe articles, which they uſed to take from us? They would deſerve to be deſpiſed for their meanneſs, did they not.

Holland, the Baltic, and the river St. Lawrence, would afford the Iriſh a ſufficient ſupply of flax-ſeed. If they look out in time they cannot be diſappointed. Canada produces no inconſiderable quantity already.——

I have been well informed, that many buſhels have been bought up there at a low price, brought to New-York, and ſold to the Iriſh factors at a great advance. Are the Iriſh ſuch novices in navigation, that they cannot find the way to Quebec? Or

are

are they ſo blind to their own intereſt, as to continue giving a high price for flax-ſeed at New-York, when they might have a conſiderable ſupply from Canada, at a much more reaſonable rate?

You will ſay, that as ſoon as the Iriſh ſend their ſhips to Quebec for ſeed, the price will riſe till it comes to an equality with ours. I know it. I know alſo, that the more the price riſes, the more Canadians will be encouraged to raiſe it. I know alſo, that the more they raiſe and ſell, the leſs demand there will be for ours, and the leſs price it will fetch at market.

Nor ſhould we diſtreſs the inhabitants of the Weſt-Indies ſo much as at firſt ſight we may imagine. Thoſe iſlands produce now many of the neceſſaries of life. The quantity may eaſily be increaſed. Canada would furniſh them with many articles they now take from us; flour, lumber, horſes, &c. Georgia, the Floridas, and the Miſſiſſippi abound in lumber; Nova-Scotia in fiſh. All theſe countries would be enriched by our folly, and would laugh at it.

When a trading people carelesly neglect, or wilfully give up any branch of their trade, it is seldom in their power to recover it. Should the Irish turn their trade for flax-seed to Quebec, and the West-Indians get their flour, horses, &c. from thence, or other places, the loss to the farmers of this province would be immense. The last non-importation scheme turned the Indian trade from New-York down the river St. Lawrence; we are now repeating, with regard to our flour and flax-seed, the same blunder we then committed with regard to the Indian trade. The consequence, however, will be much worse. The loss of the Indian trade, was a loss to the merchants only; but the loss of the flax-seed trade, will be a loss to every farmer in the province; and a loss which he will severely feel.

You know, my Friends, that the sale of your seed not only pays your taxes, but furnishes you with many of the little conveniencies, and comforts of life; the loss of it for one year would be of more damage to you, than paying the three-penny duty on tea for twenty. Let us compare matters

ters a little. It was inconvenient for me this year to ſow more than one buſhel of ſeed. I have threſhed and cleaned up eleven buſhels. The common price now is at leaſt ten ſhillings *; my ſeed then will fetch me five pounds, ten ſhillings. But I will throw in the ten ſhillings for expences. There remain five pounds: in five pounds are four hundred three-pences; four hundred three-pences currency, will pay the duty upon two hundred pounds of tea, even reckoning the exchange with London at 200 per cent. that is; reckoning 100 l. ſterling, to be equal to 200 l. currency; whereas in fact it is only equal to 175 or 180 l. at the moſt. I uſe in my family about ſix pounds of tea: few farmers in my neighbourhood uſe ſo much: but I hate to ſtint my wife and daughters, or my friendly neighbours when they come to ſee me. Beſides, I like a diſh of tea too, eſpecially after a little more than ordinary fatigue in hot weather. Now 200 pounds of tea, at ſix pounds a year, will laſt juſt 33 years, and eight months. So that in order to pay this mon-

* Since this piece was written, the price of flax-ſeed is riſen to thirteen ſhillings per buſhel.

ſtrous duty upon tea, which has raiſed all this confounded combuſtion in the country, I have only to ſell the produce of a buſhel of flax-ſeed once in THIRTY-THREE years. Ridiculous!

But, to leave jeſting. The loſs of the ſale of your ſeed only for one year, would be a conſiderable damage to you. And yet the Congreſs have been ſo inattentive to your intereſts, that they have laid you under, almoſt, an abſolute neceſſity of loſing it the next year. They have decreed, and proclaimed a non-exportation, to commence in September next. The Iriſh will be alarmed. They will look out ſomewhere elſe. Or ſhould they determine to ſend their ſhips the earlier, we cannot, without the utmoſt inconvenience, get our ſeed to market by that time; eſpecially, not from the remoter parts of the province. The conſequence will be, that we muſt ſell our ſeed at the oil-mills in New-York, juſt at the price the manufacturers ſhall pleaſe to give us.

Upon the whole then, it is highly improbable that we ſhall ſucceed in diſtreſſing

the people of Great-Britain, Ireland, and the Weſt-Indies, ſo far as to oblige them to join with us in getting the acts of Parliament which we complain of, repealed. The firſt diſtreſs will fall on ourſelves: it will be more ſeverely felt by us, than by any part of all his Majeſty's dominions; and it will affect us the longeſt. The fleets of Great-Britain command reſpect throughout the globe. Her influence extends to every part of the earth. Her manufactures are equal to any, ſuperior to moſt in the world. Her wealth is great. Her people enterprizing, and perſevering in their attempts to extend and enlarge, and protect her trade. The total loſs of our trade would be felt only for a time. Her merchants would turn their attention another way. New ſources of trade and wealth would be opened: new ſchemes purſued. She would ſoon find a vent for all her manufactures in ſpite of all we could do. Our malice would hurt ourſelves only. Should our ſchemes diſtreſs ſome branches of her trade, it could be only for a time; and there is ability and humanity enough in the nation to relieve thoſe that are diſtreſſed by us, and to put them

them in ſome other way of getting their living.

The caſe is very different with *us*. We have no trade but under the protection of Great-Britain. We can trade no where but where ſhe pleaſes. We have no influence abroad, no ambaſſadors, no conſuls, no fleet to protect our ſhips in paſſing the ſeas, nor our merchants and people in foreign countries. Should our mad ſchemes take place, our ſailors, ſhip-carpenters, carmen, ſail-makers, riggers, miners, ſmelters, forge-men, and workers in bar-iron, &c. would be immediately out of employ; and we ſhould have twenty mobs and riots in our own country, before one would happen in Britain or Ireland. Want of food will make theſe people mad, and they will come in troops upon our farms, and take that by force which they have not money to purchaſe. And who could blame them? Juſtice, indeed, might hang them; but the ſympathetic eye would drop the tear of humanity on their grave.

The next thing I ſhall take notice of, is the advanced prices of goods, which will, not

not only probably, but neceſſarily, follow, as ſoon as the non-importation from Great-Britain, &c. ſhall take effect. This is a conſequence that moſt nearly concerns you; nor can you prevent it. You are obliged to buy many articles of clothing. You cannot make them yourſelves; or you cannot make them ſo cheap as you can buy them. You want Woollens for your winter clothing. Few of you have wool enough to anſwer the purpoſe. For notwithſtanding the boaſts of ſome ignorant, hot-headed men, there is not wool enough on the continent, taking all the colonies together, to ſupply the inhabitants with ſtockings. Notwithſtanding all the home-ſpun you can make, many of you find it difficult, at the year's end, to pay the ſhop-keeper for what the neceſſities of your families have obliged you to take up. What will you do when the prices of goods are advanced a quarter, for inſtance, or an half? To ſay that the prices of goods will not be raiſed, betrays your ignorance and folly. The price of any commodity always riſes in proportion to the demand for it; and the demand always increaſes in proportion to its ſcarcity. As ſoon as the importation

tation ceaſes in New-York, the quantity of goods will be daily leſſened, by daily conſumption; and the prices will gradually riſe in proportion. "But the merchants of "New-York have declared, that they will "demand only a reaſonable profit." Who is to judge what a reaſonable profit is? Why, the merchants. Will they expoſe their invoices, and the ſecrets of their trade to you, that you may judge whether their profits are reaſonable or not? Certainly they will not; and if they did, you cannot underſtand them; and, conſequently, can form no judgment about them. You have therefore nothing to truſt to in this caſe but the honour of the merchants. Let us then conſider how far we have reaſon to truſt to their honour.

Not to raiſe the price of a commodity when it is ſcarce, and in demand, is contrary to the principles and practice of merchants. Their maxim is, to buy as cheap, and ſell as dear, as they can. Will they let you have a piece of goods for twenty ſhillings, which will fetch them twenty-five? When the ſtores and ſhops are full, and a price is demanded which you think unrea-

unreaſonable, you will aſk an abatement. If you are refuſed, you will look elſewhere. But when there are few goods and many buyers, no abatement can be expected. If you won't give the price, your neighbour perhaps is in greater neceſſity, and *muſt* give it. Beſides, the merchant knows that no more goods can be imported. He knows that the neceſſities of the country are increaſing, and that what you refuſe now at twenty ſhillings, you will be obliged to take, by and by, at twenty-five.

But no argument is like matter of fact. You have had one trial of a non-importation agreement ſome years ago. Pray how did you like it? Were the prices of goods raiſed on you then? You know they were. What remedy had you? A good Chriſtian remedy indeed, but a hard one—patience—and patience only. The honour of the merchants gave you no relief—confound their honour—it obliged me—it obliged many of you, to take old moth-eaten clothes that had lain rotting in the ſhops for years, and to pay a monſtrous price for them.

Some, indeed, I confeſs it with gratitude, had honour enough to attempt to regulate the price of Tea, at that time. Did they ſucceed? No. There was not honour enough in the body of merchants to bring it to effect. Meſſrs.

declared at the Coffee-Houſe, that they would be bound by no regulations. They would have their own price for their tea. They had it. And common bohea tea was ſold at the enormous price of nine ſhillings the pound. Will you again truſt to the honour of theſe men? You had better truſt to the mercy of a Turk.

Indulge me in a few ſentences more upon this ſame ſubject of Tea. It is well known that little or no tea has been entered at the Cuſtom-Houſe for ſeveral years. All that is imported is ſmuggled from Holland, and the Dutch Iſlands in the Weſt-Indies. In this trade the laws of our country are trampled upon. The nation is defrauded of its revenues. The ſacredneſs of an oath, the grand ſecurity of the liberty, and property, and lives of Engliſhmen, is proſti-

tuted

tuted to the vile purpoſes of private gain. Perjury and falſe ſwearing are encouraged by thoſe very merchants, to whoſe honour we are now to truſt, that they will not demand an unreaſonable profit on their goods.

Let the guilty alone take this to themſelves; I mean no reflections on the fair trader. But never will I believe that the man who can coolly and deliberately encourage perjury or falſe ſwearing—who can calmly lay ſchemes, and repeatedly execute them, in order to defraud his country of her revenues, would ever heſitate one moment, whether he ſhould not proſtitute his honour, and cheat me too, could he do it with equal ſecurity.

The poor culprit, who perhaps forced by neceſſity, turns informer, is branded with ignominy——is treated as an out-caſt from ſociety: but the lordly merchant, who, wallowing in wealth, can plead no neceſſity, tramples on the moſt ſacred obligations, and yet holds up his head, and boaſts himſelf a man of honour. O ſhame! ſhame! ſhame!

I know not how it happens, but not only the merchants, but the generality of citizens, treat us *countrymen* with very undeſerved contempt. They act as though they thought, that all wiſdom, all knowledge, all underſtanding and ſenſe, centered in themſelves; and that we farmers were utterly ignorant of every thing, but juſt to drive our oxen, and to follow the plough. We are never conſulted, but when they cannot do without us; and then, all the plans are laid in the city, before they are offered to us. Be the potion they prepare for us ever ſo nauſeous, we muſt ſwallow it down, as well as we can. It is not many years ſince the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the city ſhewed their contempt of us, in the moſt inſulting manner. They paſſed a law to regulate the prices of our produce; and, inſtead of protecting us in their markets, we were expoſed to continual abuſe and inſults. We could not carry a quart of milk, a duck, a chicken——I think not an egg——I am ſure not a quail or *ſnipe*, to market, in peace. If they were ſcarce, we durſt not aſk an advanced price; for if we did, a fine——or impriſonment,

was

was our portion.——Did they alſo fix the price of *ſhop-goods?* Catch them at that, and I will humbly aſk their pardon.—— Where was honour at this time? Troth I cannot tell: but, were it neceſſary, I could eaſily tell where ſhe was *not*.

I may, perhaps, at another time, tell you a little more of my mind upon this matter: at preſent, let us attend to another circumſtance, which I think renders the honour of the New-York merchants a little ſuſpicious, and convinces me, that we have no ſufficient ground to truſt to it. Common ſenſe cannot utterly have quitted the city; there muſt be ſome merchants who are ſenſible of the evil tendency of this Non-conſumption, Non-importation, and Non-exportation agreement. But where is the man who has had honour enough to avow his ſentiments, and oppoſe it? Shew him to me, and I will reverence him as "The no-"bleſt work of God." Six honeſt merchants, who had honour, virtue, and courage enough openly to avow their ſentiments, and act accordingly, would yet ſave you and their country from ruin.

But

But the conduct of the merchants preſents a very different proſpect. Whatever their particular ſentiments may be, they all appear to acquieſce in this fatal determination of our deluded Congreſs. They ſeem to have expected it; for it is ſaid, that they have imported much more largely than uſual: this makes me ſuſpect, that this buſtle about Non-importation, &c. has its riſe, not from Patriotiſm, but ſelfiſhneſs. I have heard that merchants ſometimes make an artificial ſcarcity, by engroſſing particular commodities in a few hands, that they may avail themſelves of the neceſſity of the buyer, and get a good price. We Countrymen are in this ſituation. No more goods can be imported; the merchants have us at their mercy; let them ſet their price ever ſo high, neceſſity will oblige us to come to their terms.

Conſider the matter in another light, and ſtill it will appear, that this Non-importation ſcheme will and muſt raiſe the prices of goods; not only now, but probably for ſome years to come.

There

There are in New-York many merchants with large capitals, and of very extenſive credit: theſe probably have laid in a large ſupply of goods, enough to laſt as long as the Non-importation continues. At leaſt, when their ſtores are like to become empty, they will have weight enough to break up the agreement. There are many other merchants whoſe capitals are ſmall, and their credit confined: theſe probably can have laid in no great ſtock. If the Non-importation agreement continues any length of time, the wealthy merchant will grow enormouſly rich, the merchant with a ſmall capital will probably fail. For conſider——the ſmall merchant muſt ſell his goods as ſoon as poſſible, that he may ſupport his family, and his credit, by making timely remittances. The wealthy merchant can wait till the ſmall ſtores are exhauſted, and then he may command a double profit. In the mean time the inferior merchant is out of buſineſs; his goods are all ſold, and ſo at a ſmall profit; he cannot import; he muſt live on his ſmall capital. As ſoon as the wealthy merchant finds his ſtore near empty, he will have influence enough to break

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the agreement, and money and credit enough to import largely again. But the inferior merchant is ruined: he has lived on his capital; it is gone; if he is not in *debt*, he has nothing to begin trade with; and he muſt become a clerk to his wealthy neighbour.

Theſe inferior merchants are of great conſequence to the community. They keep down the price of goods, and prevent its becoming exceſſive; they muſt make quick ſales, that they may make their remittances in due ſeaſon: they muſt therefore take what their goods will fetch. But the wealthy merchant can wait for a better price, without hurting his eſtate or credit; or elſe he muſt be content with the ſame advance with the merchant of ſmall capital.

Another argument to prove that the prices of goods will increaſe is, that they are already increaſed, even before the fatal day fixed for the commencement of the Non-importation Agreement. Several perſons, whom I take to be good judges, have aſſured me, that the prices of woollens, linens, &c. are very perceptibly increaſed in the ſhops in New-York. And I was told, by a very credible man from New-

New-York, that the price of gun-powder was raiſed from 9 or 10 l. to 17 or 18 l. per hundred. I know you'll ſtare, and wiſh to know, what could ſo enormouſly advance the article of Gun-powder; I'll tell you. It was the great and ſudden demand for it, when the Putmans and Co. of New-England, were in ſuch a violent hurry to divert themſelves with fighting the King's troops: and ſhould theſe heroes take it into their heads to divert themſelves with puſh-pin, I ſuppoſe the price of pins would riſe in the ſame proportion.

I come now to the conſideration of another probable conſequence of a Non-importation agreement, which is, That it will excite the reſentment of the government at home againſt us, and induce the Parliament to block up our ports and prevent our trade entirely. It would certainly be good policy in the government to do ſo. Few Colonies are ſettled but by a trading people, and by them chiefly for the benefit of trade. The grand deſign of England in ſettling the American Colonies, was to extend her trade—to open a new vent for her manufactures. If then we ſtop our imports, the benefit of our

trade is in a manner loſt to her, and ſhe would find but little additional diſadvantage, ſhould ſhe ſtop our trade with all the world.

But ſhould the government purſue milder meaſures——though we indeed have no right to expect it will——yet the Congreſs have determined the expediency of our ſtopping our own trade, after a limited time, viz. ten months. In either caſe the conſequence will be much the ſame; and it matters but little whether the government blocks up our ports, or whether we ourſelves voluntarily put an end to our exports, as well as imports; after the tenth of September next we are to have but little trade, except with our neighbouring Colonies.

Conſider the conſequence. Should the government interpoſe, we ſhall have no trade at all, and conſequently no vent for the produce of our farms. Such part of our wheat, flax-ſeed, corn, beef, pork, butter, cheeſe, as was not conſumed in the province, muſt be left to rot and ſtink upon our hands.

Should the government leave us to ourſelves, the little trade that would be open,

would never keep theſe articles at ſuch a price, as to make it worth while to raiſe more of them than we want for our own conſumption.

Look well to yourſelves, I beſeech you. From the day that the exports from this province are ſtopped, the farmers may date the commencement of their ruin. Can you live without money? Will the ſhop-keeper *give* you his goods? Will the weaver, ſhoemaker, blackſmith, carpenter, work for you without pay? If they will, it is more than they will do for me. And unleſs you can ſell your produce, how are you to get money? Nor will the caſe be better, if you are obliged to ſell your produce at an underrate; for then it will not pay you for the labour and expence of raiſing it. But this is the leaſt part of the diſtreſs that will come upon you.

Unhappily, many of you are in debt, and obliged to pay the enormous intereſt of ſeven pounds on the hundred, for conſiderable ſums. It matters not whether your debts have been contracted through neceſſity, or careleſſneſs: you muſt pay them, at *leaſt*

the intereſt, punctually; the uſurer will not wait long; indeed you cannot expect he ſhould: you have had his money, and are obliged, in juſtice, to pay him the principal and intereſt, according to agreement. But without ſelling your produce, you can neither pay the one, nor the other; the conſequence will be, that after a while, a proceſs of law will be commenced againſt you, and your farms muſt be ſold by execution; and then you will have to pay not only principal and intereſt, but Sheriffs fees, Lawyers fees, and a long liſt of *& cæteras*.

Now, under theſe circumſtances, will your farms fetch half what they coſt you. What is a farm good for, the produce of which cannot be ſold? Had matters continued in their old courſe, ſome one of your neighbours, who knew the value of your farm, might have been willing and able to have given you a reaſonable price for it, had you been diſpoſed, or obliged to ſell; but he has more wit than to buy a farm, when he cannot ſell its produce. Your creditor then, or ſome rich merchant, or uſurer, muſt take it at their own price: to you it is of no conſequence who takes it; for you are ruined,

ed, ſtripped of your farm, and very probably of the means of ſubſiſtence for yourſelf and family. Glorious effect of Non-exportation! Think a little, and then tell me——when the Congreſs adopted this curſed ſcheme, did they in the leaſt conſider your intereſt? No, impoſſible! they ignorantly miſunderſtood, careleſsly neglected, or baſely betrayed you.

But, it is ſaid, that all legal proceſſes are to be ſtopped, except in criminal caſes.—— That is to ſay—the lower claſs of people are to be deprived of their daily bread, by being thrown out of employment by the Non-Exportation agreement; to prevent ſtarving, many of them will be tempted to ſteal; if they ſteal, they are to be hanged. The diſhoneſt fellow, who owes money, may, by refuſing payment, ruin his creditor; but there is no remedy, no proceſs is to be iſſued againſt him. This may be juſtice, but it looks ſo much like cruelty, that a man of a humane heart would be more apt to call it by the latter, than the former name.

But pray, by whoſe authority are the courts of Juſtice to be ſhut up, in all civil caſes?

caſes?——Who ſhall DARE to ſtop the Courts of Juſtice?——A very pretty ſtory indeed! I buy a cow of my poor neighbour, and I promiſe to pay him at Chriſtmas: he wants the money to pay his ſhoe-maker, taylor, &c. my raſcally neighbour, on the other ſide, owes me ten pounds; I depend upon this money to pay for the cow: he refuſes payment: the Courts of Juſtice are ſhut up: I cannot ſue him, nor can I pay my debt for want of the money.

My neighbour Dick Stubbs has a farm which he rents to Peter Doubtful for 20 l. a year. Dick is an honeſt, good ſort of a man, but rather negligent, and depends upon this 20 l. to enable him to make both ends of the year meet, as we ſay. There is one Tim Twiſtwell, a Raſcal from New-England, who lays claim to Stubbs's farm, tho' he has no more right to it than the Pope of Rome. He knows his right is good for nothing, and has never dared to proſecute it, though he has money enough, and has been *harping* upon it theſe ſeven years. But he has lately made ſeveral attempts to corrupt Doubtful the tenant. Should he ſucceed,

ſucceed, and get poſſeſſion of the farm, how is Stubbs to recover his right, when the courts of juſtice are ſhut up? You may ſay that he muſt wait till the courts are opened, and then he may proſecute his claim. It may be ſo. But remember, that the ſame violence which now ſhuts the courts of juſtice, may keep them ſhut, till poor Stubbs is abſolutely ruined.

Rouze, my Friends, rouze from your ſtupid lethargy. Mark the men who ſhall dare to impede the courſe of juſtice; brand them as the infamous betrayers of the rights of their country. The grand ſecurity of the property, the liberty, the lives of Engliſhmen, conſiſts in the due adminiſtration of juſtice: while the courts are duly attended to, and fairly conducted, our property is ſafe; as ſoon as they are ſhut, every thing is precarious: for neither property nor liberty have any foundation to ſtand upon.

Tell me not of Delegates, Congreſſes, Committees, Riots, Mobs, Inſurrections, Aſſociations,—a plague on them all.—Give me the ſteady, uniform, unbiaſſed influence of the Courts of Juſtice. I have been happy

py under their protection, and I truſt in God I ſhall be ſo again.

But after all, ſome of you, I fear, look forward with pleaſure to thoſe halcyon days of ſecurity, when the Courts ſhall be ſhut. Undiſturbed by the clamours of creditors, undiſmayed by the ſight of the Sheriff, you think to paſs your lives in quietneſs and peace!—But ah! my friends! truſt not the fatal, the ill-judged ſecurity. You would not, I hope, be ſo diſhoneſt as not to do your utmoſt endeavour to pay your debts; beſides, while the Courts of Juſtice are ſhut, you will be apt to be careleſs; you will neglect paying your intereſt, your debts will accumulate, your creditors will be irritated; and, as ſoon as a legal proceſs can be commenced, you will be ruined before you can look about you.

Some of you are indebted to the loan-office. You have your money, it is true, at a low rate; you pay only five *per centum*: but, if you cannot ſell your produce, you can no more pay five *per cent.* than ſeven. The ſhutting up of the Courts of Juſtice can here give you no relief. By virtue of the

the act which regulates the Loan-Office, your farms, if you fail to pay the intereſt, will be ſold in a limited time, without any judicial proceſs at all.

Some of you, alſo, are tenants at will; and if you fail in paying your rents, you may be turned off, with little or no warning.

Conſider now the ſituation you will be in, if Great-Britain, provoked by your Non-importation Agreement, ſhould ſhut up our ports; or ſhould the Non-exportation agreed to by the Congreſs, take effect. In that caſe you will not be able to ſell your produce; you cannot pay even the intereſt of the money you are indebted for: your farms muſt be ſold, and you and your families turned out, to beggary and wretchedneſs.—Bleſſed fruits of Non-importation and Non-exportation! The farmer that is in debt, will be ruined; the farmer that is clear in the world, will be obliged to run in debt, to ſupport his family: and while the proud merchant, and the forſworn ſmuggler, riot in their ill-gotten wealth, the laborious farmers, the grand ſupport of every

well-regulated country, muſt all go to the dogs together.—Vile! Shameful! Diabolical Device!

Let us attend a little to the Non-conſumption Agreement, which the Congreſs, in their Aſſociation, have impoſed upon us. After the firſt of March we are not to purchaſe or uſe any Eaſt-India Tea whatſoever; nor any goods, wares, or merchandize from Great-Britain or Ireland, imported after the firſt day of December next; nor any molaſſes, ſyrups, &c. from the Britiſh plantations in the Weſt-Indies, or from Dominica; nor wine from Madeira, or the Weſtern Iſlands; nor foreign indigo.

Will you ſubmit to this ſlaviſh regulation?—You muſt.—Our ſovereign Lords and Maſters, the High and Mighty Delegates, in Grand Continental Congreſs aſſembled, have ordered and directed it. They have directed the Committees in the reſpective colonies, to eſtabliſh ſuch further regulations as they may think proper, for carrying their aſſociation, of which this Non-conſumption agreement is a part, into execution. Mr. ***** *** of New-York, under the authority

rity of their High-Mightineſſes, the Delegates, by and with the advice of his Privy-Council, the Committee of New-York, hath iſſued his mandate, bearing date November 7, 1774, recommending it to the freeholders and freemen of New-York, to aſſemble on the 18th of November, to chooſe eight perſons out of every ward, to be a Committee, to carry the Aſſociation of the Congreſs into execution.—The buſineſs of the Committee ſo choſen is to be, to inſpect the conduct of the inhabitants, and ſee whether they violate the Aſſociation.—Among other things, Whether they drink any Tea or wine in their families, after the firſt of March; or wear any Britiſh or Iriſh manufactures; or uſe any Engliſh molaſſes, &c. imported after the firſt day of December next. If they do, their names are to be publiſhed in the Gazette, that they may be *publickly known*, and *univerſally contemned*, as *foes to the Rights of Britiſh America*, and *enemies of American liberty*.—And then *the parties of the ſaid Aſſociation will reſpectively break off all dealings with him or her*.—In plain Engliſh,—They ſhall be conſidered as Outlaws, unworthy of the protection of civil ſociety, and delivered

over to the vengeance of a lawleſs, outrageous mob, to be *tarred, feathered, hanged, drawn, quartered, and burnt.*—O rare American Freedom!

Probably, as ſoon as this point is ſettled in New-York, the ſaid Mr. ***** *** in the plenitude of his power, by and with the advice of his Privy-Council aforeſaid, will iſſue his Mandate to the ſuperviſors in the ſeveral counties, as he did about the choice of Delegates, and direct them to have Committees choſen in their reſpective diſtricts, for the ſame laudable purpoſe.

Will you be inſtrumental in bringing the moſt abject ſlavery on yourſelves? Will you chooſe ſuch Committees? Will you ſubmit to them, ſhould they be choſen by the weak, fooliſh, turbulent part of the country people?—Do as you pleaſe; but, by HIM that made me, I will not.—No, if I muſt be enſlaved, let it be by a KING at leaſt, and not by a parcel of lawleſs upſtart Committee-men. If I muſt be devoured, let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion, and not *gnawed* to death by rats and vermin.

Did

Did you chooſe your ſuperviſors for the purpoſe of inſlaving you? What right have they to fix up advertiſements to call you together, for a very different purpoſe from that for which they were elected? Are our ſuperviſors our maſters?——And ſhould half a dozen fooliſh people meet together again, in conſequence of their advertiſements, and chooſe themſelves to be a Committee, as they did in many diſtricts, in the affair of chooſing Delegates, are we obliged to ſubmit to ſuch a Committee?——You ought, my friends, to aſſert your own freedom. Should ſuch another attempt be made upon you, aſſemble yourſelves together: tell your ſuperviſor, that he has exceeded his commiſſion:——That you will have no ſuch Committees:——That you are Engliſhmen, and will maintain your rights and privileges, and will eat, and drink, and wear, whatever the public laws of your country permit, without aſking leave of any illegal, tyrannical Congreſs or Committee on earth.

But however, as I ſaid before, do as you pleaſe: if you like it better, chooſe your Com-

Committee, or ſuffer it to be choſen by half a dozen Fools in your neighbourhood, ——open your doors to them,——let them examine your tea-caniſters, and molaſſes-jugs, and your wives and daughters petticoats,——bow, and cringe, and tremble, and quake,——fall down and worſhip our ſovereign lord the Mob.—But I repeat it, by H———n, I will not.——No, my houſe is my caſtle: as ſuch I will conſider it, as ſuch I will defend it, while I have breath. No *King*'s officer ſhall enter it without my permiſſion, unleſs ſupported by a warrant from a magiſtrate.——And ſhall my houſe be entered, and my mode of living enquired into, by a domineering Committee-man? Before *I* ſubmit, I will die: live *you*, and be ſlaves.

Do, I ſay, as you pleaſe: but ſhould any pragmatical Committee-gentleman come to my houſe, and give himſelf airs, I ſhall ſhew him the door, and if he does not ſoon take himſelf away, a good hiccory cudgel ſhall teach him better manners.

There is one article more of the Aſſociation, which exhibits ſuch a ſtriking inſtance of

of the ignorance, or inattention of the Congreſs to the Farmers intereſt, that I muſt take notice of it to you; eſpecially as it will give me an opportunity of mentioning as ſtriking an inſtance of the arbitrary, illegal, and tyrannical procedure of the Committee of Correſpondence in New-York.

The article I mean, is the ſeventh, relative to the increaſing of the number and improving of the breed of ſheep. No ſheep of any kind are to be exported to the Weſt-Indies, or elſewhere. Why, for God's ſake, were *weathers* included in this prohibition? Will weathers increaſe the number, or improve the breed of ſheep? I wiſh the Gentlemen of the Congreſs, and the Committee-men of New-York, would try the experiment. Let them buy a ſcore of weathers, and feed, and nurſe them for a twelvemonth; and then publiſh an account of the number of lambs they have produced, their enormous ſize, with the quantity and fineneſs of their wool; that we may know in what manner the number and breed of ſheep may be increaſed, and improved, by keeping weathers. But let this account be under oath, or I ſhall not

believe

believe that they have ſucceeded, either in increaſing the number, or improving the breed. I ſolemnly declare I never had one lamb produced from a weather in my whole life; and have always been ſo ignorant, that I ſhould no more expect a lamb from a weather, than a calf from an ox.

But it may be ſaid, that weathers will produce wool, and that it is for the ſake of the wool that their exportation is prevented. I readily own that weathers will produce wool, though not lambs. But let me aſk you, my brother farmers, which of you would keep a flock of ſheep barely for the ſake of their wool? Not one of you. If you cannot ſell your ſheep to advantage at a certain age, you cannot keep them to any profit. An ewe ſhould not be kept after ſhe is ſix years old, nor a weather after he is four: few of you chooſe to keep them ſo long. What now muſt be done with our ſheep when they become ſo old that we can keep them no longer with advantage? We are ordered *to kill them ſparingly:* a queer phraſe; however, let it paſs. If it is not *claſſical*, it is *congreſſional*; and that's enough. And after having killed them *ſparingly*,

ringly, if we have any to *ſpare*, we muſt *ſpare* them to our poor neighbours. But ſuppoſing that after *killing them ſparingly, and ſparing* as many to my poor neighbours as they want, I ſhould, by reaſon of *killing them ſparingly*, have ſtill more to *ſpare*—— what ſhall I do with them? Exported they muſt not be. Why! fat them well, and ſell them to the New-Yorkers: The deuce take them for a ſett of gundy-gutted fellows——will they let us export nothing? Do they intend to eat all our wheat, and rye, and corn, and beef, and pork, and mutton, and butter, and cheeſe, and turkeys, and geeſe, and ducks, and fowls, and chickens, and eggs, &c.? the devil is in't if their bellies are not filled. And yet ſee their ill-nature and malice againſt us farmers.——After having furniſhed them with all this good chear, which they muſt have at their own price too, they will not in return let us have a diſh of tea to pleaſe our wives, nor a glaſs of Madeira to chear our ſpirits, nor even a ſpoonful of Molaſſes to ſweeten our butter-milk. To be ſerious——

Had the Congreſs attended in the leaſt to the farmers intereſt, they never would have prohibited the exportation of ſheep, after they came to a certain age. It is the exportation that keeps up the price of ſheep; it is the advantageous price that encourages the farmer to feed them: take away the profit of ſelling them, and the farmer will keep but very few. For they are not, and I am confident never will be in this country, worth keeping for their wool only.

However, right or wrong, the Congreſs have paſſed the decree. *Thou ſhalt not export ſheep*, was pronounced at Philadelphia; and, right or wrong, the Committee of New-York are determined to put it in execution: And *thou ſhalt not export ſheep*, is echoed back from New-York.

How this decree is to be ſupported in New-York, may be learned from the following affair. A Gentleman, an officer in the King's ſervice, had purchaſed a number of ſheep to carry with him to St. Vincent's: Mr. GAINE's news-paper ſays eighteen.

eighteen. The New-Yorkers, probably afraid that they ſhould loſe their ſhare of the mutton, aſſembled on the dock, ſent for the Committee, and in open violation of the laws of their country, obliged the merchant to whom the veſſel had been conſigned, to have the ſheep landed; the ſheep were committed to ſafe durance till the veſſel ſailed, and then were delivered to the proprietor——I ſuppoſe to the perſon who had ſold the... to the officer: though how he could be the proprietor after he had ſold them, I cannot ſee. Had I been the perſon, I would have had nothing to do with them; the Committee might have done what they pleaſed with them—*killed them ſparingly*, or *ſpared* them to their poor neighbours. But had there been law or juſtice in the government, I would have been paid for them: though, now I think of it, I would have made a preſent of them to the Committee, upon condition that they ſhould make the experiment how far the number and breed of ſheep can be increaſed and improved by keeping weathers; for I have been poſitively aſſured, that theſe ſame ſheep, which made all this buſtle, were nothing more.

Here now, my friends, is a flagrant inſtance of injuſtice and cruelty committed by a riotous mob ;—for a number of people, be they Committee-men, or who you pleaſe, aſſembled to do an unlawful action, eſpecially in the night, deſerve no better name, —againſt both the buyer and ſeller of the ſheep, in open violation of the laws of the government in which we live, and of the rights of the city in which it was perpetrated ; and not a ſingle magiſtrate had virtue or courage enough to interpoſe. O ſhame to humanity ! Hold up your heads, ye Committee-men of New-York ! Deny the charge if ye can. But remember, the inſtant ye deny it, ye forfeit all pretenſions to truth or conſcience.

Think me not too ſevere. Anarchy and Confuſion, Violence and Oppreſſion, diſtreſs my country ; and I muſt, and *will* ſpeak. Though the open violator of the laws may eſcape puniſhment, through the puſillanimity of the magiſtrates, he ſhall feel the laſh of my pen : and he ſhall feel it again and again, till remorſe ſhall ſting his guilty conſcience, and ſhame cover his opprobrious head.

But

But perhaps you will ſay, that theſe men are contending for our rights; that they are defending our liberties; and though they act againſt law, yet that the neceſſity of the times will juſtify them. Let me ſee. I ſell a number of ſheep. I drive them to New-York, and deliver them to the purchaſer. A mob interpoſes, and obliges me to take my ſheep again, and drive them home for my pains, or ſell them for juſt what they pleaſe to give me. Are theſe the rights, is this the liberty, theſe men are contending for? It is vile, abject ſlavery, and I will have none of it. Theſe men defend our rights and liberties, who act in open defiance of the laws? No. They are making us the moſt abject ſlaves that ever exiſted. The neceſſity of the times juſtify them in violating the firſt principles of civil ſociety! Who induced this neceſſity? Who involved the pro·ince in diſcord, anarchy and confuſion? Theſe very men. They created that neceſſity, which they now plead in their own juſtification.

Let me intreat you, my Friends, to have nothing to do with theſe men, or with any of

of the ſame ſtamp. Peace and quietneſs ſuit *you* beſt. Confuſion, and Diſcord, and Violence, and War, are ſure deſtruction to the *farmer*. Without peace he cannot till his lands; unleſs protected by the laws, he cannot carry his produce to market. Peace indeed is departed from us for the preſent, and the protection of the laws has ceaſed. But I truſt in God, there is yet one method left, which by prudent management, will free us from all our difficulties; reſtore peace again to our dwellings, and give us the firm ſecurity of the laws for our protection. Renounce all dependence on Congreſſes, and Committees. They have neglected, or betrayed your intereſts. Turn then your eyes to your *conſtitutional* repreſentatives. They are the true, and legal, and have been hitherto, the faithful defenders of your rights, and liberties; and you have no reaſon to think but they will ever be ſo. They will probably ſoon meet in General Aſſembly. Addreſs yourſelves to them. They are the proper perſons to obtain redreſs of any grievances that you can juſtly complain of. You can truſt their wiſdom and prudence, that they will uſe the moſt reaſonable, conſtitutional, and effectual methods of reſtoring

ſtoring that peace and harmony, between Great-Britain and this province, which is ſo earneſtly wiſhed for by all good men, and which is ſo abſolutely neceſſary for the happineſs of us all. Preſent a petition to them, intreating them to take the matter into their own hands, and to labour earneſtly to accompliſh ſo bleſſed a purpoſe. But beware of giving them any directions *how* to proceed. As ſoon as ever you attempt to *inſtruct* them, you lay yourſelves open to be duped and fooled by deſigning men, in the drawing of your inſtructions. Some will inſtruct them to do one thing, and ſome another, and you will embarraſs, but not help forward their deliberations.

Your REPRESENTATIVES know perfectly the ſtate of the unhappy breach between our mother country and us. They want no information in this point. The more you truſt them at this time, the more you will put it in their power to ſerve you; and the greater obligation you will lay them under to ſerve you *faithfully*, and *effectually*. Only beſeech them to heal this unnatural breach; to ſettle this deſtructive contention; that peace and quietneſs, and the firm protection

of

of law, and good government, may again be our happy lot. Would the ſeveral counties, or towns in the province, conduct themſelves in this manner, God, I am confident, would bleſs, and give a proſperous iſſue to ſo good a work.

And whatever you may be taught by deſigning men, to think of the Government at home, they, I am certain, would embrace us with the arms of friendſhip; they would preſs us to their boſoms, to their hearts, would we give them a fair opportunity. This opportunity our *Aſſembly* alone can give them. And this opportunity, I truſt, they will give them, unleſs we prevent all poſſibility of accommodation, by our own perverſeneſs, and ill conduct. And then, God only knows where our diſtreſſes may terminate.

November 16, 1774.

A. W. FARMER.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

MUCH ſtreſs has been laid, it ſeems, upon the *unanimity* of the Delegates, and it has been urged, that *all the inhabitants of the continent* ſhould think themſelves in *honour* obliged to abide *paſſively* by their deciſions, be they what they *may*, as they were *their Repreſentatives*.—But I would juſt obſerve, that not *one perſon* in *an hundred* (to ſpeak much within bounds) throughout *this* province at leaſt, gave his vote for their *election*: and as to the *unanimity* which was ſuppoſed to prevail amongſt them, it is now pretty generally underſtood, and it is an undoubted fact, that not only *moſt* or *all* of the *New-York* members, but many others, of the moſt *reſpectable characters* amongſt them, warmly oppoſed their conduct in a MULTITUDE of inſtances; though they had unhappily agreed, before their entrance upon buſineſs, that neither *proteſt* nor *diſſent* ſhould appear upon their

minutes. The *arts* and *ſtratagems* uſed on *this* and ſome *other* occaſions, during the ſeſſion of the Congreſs, together with the *caballing out* of doors, and the UNFAIR DEALINGS *within,* will fill up more pages, than are comprehended in the *preſent* Letter to my *Fellow-Farmers.*

FINIS.